

Remote Contesting

Welcome to our second column of "Remote Contesting." But, before I claim any milestone, I am reminded that articles about remote contesting have appeared in *NCJ* at least since 1996, when the November/December issue described how Danny, K7SS, used a telephone and a laptop to connect to the K7XX remote station for the September 1996 CW Sprint. Over the years, articles about remote contesting have appeared many times:

◆ January/February 2012 "Remote Contesting" by Ron Lodewyck, N6EE

◆ May/June 2013 "ARRL November Sweepstakes CW with Room Service" by Tree Tyree, N6TR

◆ September/October 2013 "Contesting by Remote Control" by Mike Lonneke, WØYR

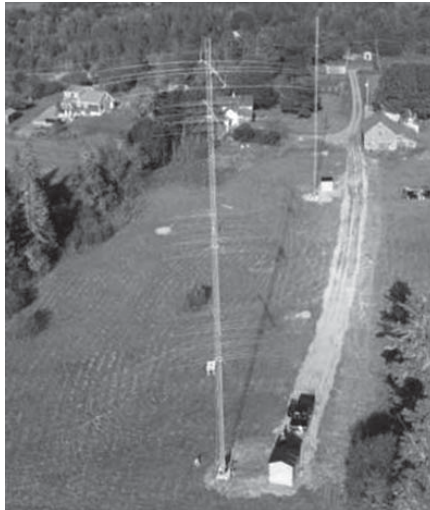
The common thread in these articles is contesters overcoming geographic or travel barriers, using technology to access a remote station and being able to get on-the-air and participate in contests. This month let's review a remote contesting basic — follow the rules.

Under FCC rules, remote operating is clearly allowed and "lightly" regulated. FCC Part 97.109(b) says, "Any station may be remotely controlled." Part 97.213 has some simple requirements for a control operator and a control link: For a 3-minute time-out on the transmitter in the event of malfunction; protection against improper operation, and a photocopy of the station license and contact information posted at the transmitter. Any FCC-licensed amateur operator may remotely operate any US-located station, even if that FCC-licensed operator is physically located overseas.

In general, both the operator and the station must be licensed for the location of the transmitter. Current interpretations are that a CEPT-licensed operator must be physically present in the country where the transmitter is located in order to operate a remote-controlled station legally. This has reduced remote operation between European countries. CEPT is the abbreviation for the European Conference of Postal and Telecommunications Administrations, which establishes a license framework for traveling and visiting operators.

ARRL has a helpful page on "International Operating," www.arrrl.org/international-operating. For remote operating across country boundaries you need to verify the rules and requirements with the telecommunication regulators in the country where the transmitter is located, and you may need to obtain a license issued by that authority.

It is always required to identify in a manner that indicates the location of the transmitter. In addition to being a regulatory



The W1/Lubec station on RemoteHamRadio.com is owned by David, KA2HTV, and located in Lubec, Maine. [Ray Higgins, W2RE, photo]

requirement, proper identification allows contest participants to determine if you are a multiplier for a given contest. Contest sponsors have generally welcomed remote operating as a way to increase participation.

For ARRL-sponsored contests, remote operation is allowed if such operation is permitted in the country where the remote station transmitter is sited. Your call sign must indicate the location of the transmitter. The operator must be licensed to operate in the country of the remote station, you must follow the regulations of that country, and you must have permission of the station owner to access and operate the equipment. ARRL has a helpful page on "Contest Remote Station Operation," www.arrrl.org/contest-remote-station-operation.

For *CQ Magazine*-sponsored contests, remote operation is permitted if the physical location of all transmitters, receivers, and antennas are at one station location (a single 500-meter diameter circle), you obey all station license, operator license, and category limitations, and the call sign used is one issued or permitted by the regulatory authority governing the station location. Recent *CQ* World Wide DX contests have seen many shoot outs between big remotely operated stations in the US Northeast (see photo).

For other contests, it is generally safe to assume that remote operation is allowed unless specifically prohibited in the rules. The many *NCJ*, CWops, and regional and state QSO parties allow remotely controlled stations. A few examples where remote operation is limited would be the RSGB IOTA contest, which intends to have operators physically on the islands being activated

as island stations, or the summer or winter Field Day activities, which intend for the operators to be literally "in the field."

But how do we make use of this information to improve our contesting? First, we could install our contest station outside of town, where more space is available, away from electrical noise and complaining neighbors. We are likely to make higher scores remotely operating our contest station than we could make from a small, city lot-compromised station.

Second, with our US operator license, we can use a contest station somewhere else in the US that is more competitive for that contest. For example, use a station in Maine for a DX contest focusing on Europe, or a station in California to be "in state" for the California QSO Party. The various stations of Remote Ham Radio (www.remotehamradio.com) have been used in many contest operations, either to get an operator on the air or to provide a competitive station for the contest. Keep in mind that Remote Ham Radio is a commercial enterprise, and users pay fees to operate the remote stations on the network. Free trials are offered, however.

Another example is Kevin Stockton, N5DX, of Arkansas, who operated remotely to the N2QV station in New York — owned by Tariq Mundiya, N2QV — for the 2018 ARRL International DX Contest CW. Stockton helped to design the station. You can learn more about the N2QV remote station at QRZ.com or from Mundiya's article "From Casual Weekend DX Station to Remote Contesting Station," which appeared in the May 2018 edition of *CQ* (see www.cq-amateur-radio.com/cq-sample-issue.pdf, p 27).

Gerry Hull, W1VE/VE1RM, and others have worked with J Allen, VY1JA, in Yukon Territory, Canada, to vastly improve and remotely control Allen's station from the US and provide the popular NT multiplier as VY1AAA.

Are these remote contest stations fair? Well, that may be the subject for a future column, but Ray Higgins, W2RE, of Remote Ham Radio believes these facilities are finally creating a more level playing field by enabling the good operators who do not live in the US northeast to compete with the locals.

Finally, if you have been travelling to a DX location for contests, it might be useful to determine if remote-controlled operation is allowed in that licensing jurisdiction, and then set up the DX station for remote operation. The amount of travel can be greatly reduced, and additional non-traveling operators can be brought on board. Allowing good operators to connect with a good station, without the time and difficulties of travel, is a winning combination!

Send me your comments and suggestions, and I'll see you in the contest!

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